



# Community Safety and Well-Being

2024 Annual Report



# Table of Contents

Land Acknowledgement	01
Introduction	02
Pickering's CSWB Priorities	03
1. Improve Community Vitality	03
2. Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnership and Creative Communities	08
3. Create Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods	12
4. Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness	16
5. Improve Living Standards	20
6. Support Basic Needs	24
7. Promote EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), Accessibility & Reconciliation	31
Conclusion	35

# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations.

Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations.

This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.



# Introduction

In 2024, the Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee (CSWBAC) continued its commitment to fostering a safer and more inclusive community. Throughout the year, the committee held three formal meetings and collaborated with City staff, stakeholders, and community partners to support a wide range of initiatives aligned with the Community Safety and Well-Being (CSWB) Plan.

Key accomplishments reflect a collective effort to implement CSWB Plan priorities and action items. This work included active participation in the review and development of critical strategies and plans, such as the Corporate Strategic Plan, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, Recreation & Parks Ten Year Plan, Community Safety & Well-Being Plan, and the Community Climate Adaptation Plan. A significant achievement was the establishment of the Homelessness Subcommittee (HS), with CSWBAC members contributing to the drafting of its mandate, goals, and objectives for the upcoming term, in collaboration with City staff and other stakeholders.

The committee also endorsed several significant community safety and well-being initiatives, including:

- The CSWB Plan endorsement (Resolution #491/24)
- Community Safety & Crime Prevention Sessions in partnership with Durham Regional Police Service (DRPS)
- Recommendation for a Community Safety Zone along West Shore Boulevard (Resolution #574/24)
- A partnership with Lakeridge Health to deliver a Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease program (Resolution #588/24)
- Renewal of the Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS) shower program (Resolution #589/24)

# Pickering’s CSWB Priorities

Pickering’s CSWB Plan includes **7 priority areas** and **60 action items**. This Annual Report has been sub-categorized by Pickering’s Community Safety & Well-Being (CSWB) Plan Priorities.



## 1. Improve Community Vitality

**Objective:**  
Create a sense of belonging with residents through targeted initiatives like volunteering, programs targeting social isolation, or programs and events that support socialization and community pride.



## Community Safety Meetings

In alignment with the CSWB Plan's objective to foster collaborative, proactive approaches to crime prevention and public safety education, the Community Safety & Well-Being Advisor supported a series of Community Safety Meetings in partnership with DRPS and local community associations. These sessions provided residents with critical information on crime trends, prevention strategies, and available resources, reinforcing a shared responsibility for community safety.

There were three focused sessions, which collectively engaged 72 attendees:

- **Auto Theft and Break-In Prevention**  
Educated residents on securing their vehicles and homes against theft.
- **Frauds and Scams**  
Raised awareness about common fraud tactics and how to protect personal and financial information.
- **Anti-Bullying and Cyberbullying**  
Highlighted the risks and impact of bullying, with strategies for prevention and support.

These meetings directly contributed to the CSWB Plan by enhancing public awareness, increasing community engagement, and fostering partnerships between residents, law enforcement, and local stakeholders. By providing education and resources, these sessions empowered residents to take proactive steps in protecting themselves from these types of crimes, while promoting a safer, more connected community.



## Volunteer Opportunities

Creating a sense of belonging through volunteer opportunities was exemplified in several ways. From January to December 2024, 160 new volunteers were recruited, demonstrating active community engagement and a welcoming environment. The contribution of volunteer hours was significant, with a total of 11,813 hours.

A total of 238 volunteers were engaged in various areas across Community Services, Animal Services, and the

Sustainability Section. New volunteer opportunities were introduced in 2024, including PA Day camp positions, the Pickering Fire Services open house, waterfront shuttle program, trick or treat at Pickering Museum Village, and various Earth Month events. The City also reinstated/reworked its aquatics volunteer program. This broad and diverse range of opportunities fostered a strong sense of belonging within the community.

## Community Pride

In 2024, both the City and the Pickering Public Library (PPL) hosted a series of impactful Pride events, fostering a sense of community and inclusivity. Together, the City organized 22 vibrant programs that attracted a total attendance of over 1400 participants. These events included a 2SLGBTQIA+ Support Group (Prism Collective), Identity Panel, Drag Queen Storytime,

Drag Bingo, Pride Durham Annual Pride Parade, and Youth Pride Durham's annual Pride celebration all aimed at celebrating diversity and promoting understanding. The combined efforts of the City and the Library highlighted a united front in celebrating Pride, reinforcing dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all residents.





## Community Environmental Stewardship



### Park Stewardship Program

This City program encourages businesses and community groups to help keep local parks clean. As of 2024, there are 21 active groups who volunteer to be Park Stewards by making a commitment to do litter cleanups and promote a positive image in their neighbourhood park.

### Community Litter Cleanups

Volunteers participate in litter clean up initiatives through Pickering's 20-Minute Makeover, Plastics & Litter Challenge, and the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. This year, 50 community cleanups took place throughout the City, representing over 2,665 participants, a 33.25% increase from 2023.

### Take Pride in Pickering

In the spring, the City hosted its annual Take Pride in Pickering Day, in collaboration with OPG and the TRCA, where over 120 community members volunteered to plant 400 trees and clean up litter in Alex Robertson Park. In the fall, the City partnered with OPG, 10,000 Trees, and TRCA for another Take Pride in Pickering Day event, during which 100 volunteers planted 100 trees and 200 aquatic plants.

### Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market

The City had another successful Farmers' Market season, helping residents connect with farmers, bakers, artisans, and small local businesses. Residents enjoyed weekly entertainment by talented artists and special events like a corn roast. The market ran for 17 weeks, with approximately 2,400 visitors, supporting upwards of 29 vendors. Thanks to community support, the Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market won 1st Place – Diamond Winner in the Ajax Pickering Readers' Choice Awards. This is the 6th consecutive year that the City has been recognized in the Readers' Choice Awards 'Best Farm Market' category.

In 2024 the Pickering City Centre Farmers' Market welcomed the Common Ground Foodshare – Market Dollars program for the months of June and July. With priority of helping those facing food insecurity, the program was dedicated to making fresh produce available to everyone. The Market Dollars were intended to create a dignified experience for everyone that would like to take part in the Farmers' Market.







## 2. Strengthen Learning, Education, Partnership and Creative Communities

### Objective:

Create opportunities for residents to learn about community safety and well-being and contribute to solutions in creative ways.

### Durham Community Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence

The Durham Community Walk to End Intimate Partner Violence was a powerful demonstration of solidarity and advocacy, bringing together community members, service providers, and local organizations to raise awareness about intimate partner violence (IPV) and support survivors. This initiative aligned with the CSWB Plan's goal of fostering safer, more inclusive communities through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

The walk was organized in partnership with key organizations dedicated to supporting survivors and addressing IPV, including:

- Bethesda House
- Victim Services Durham Region
- Safety Network Durham
- Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre
- Y's Wish Shelter
- Luke's Place
- The Denise House
- Herizon House

Together, these partners provided resources, shared survivor stories, and highlighted the urgent need for community action in preventing and responding to IPV. The event served as both a call to action and a show of support for individuals affected by IPV, reinforcing the importance of a coordinated, community-driven response to gender-based violence.

The presence and support of the CSWB Advisor were pivotal in ensuring the event aligned with broader community safety and well-being priorities, emphasizing the need for ongoing collaboration and advocacy in addressing intimate partner violence.

### Dementia-Friendly Communities Training

In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society of Durham Region, the CSWB Advisor hosted five Dementia-Friendly Communities training sessions, providing essential education to support the growing needs of its aging population. These sessions equipped 143 participants, including staff and community members, with practical strategies to engage with individuals experiencing dementia.

Through hands-on scenarios and interactive learning, participants developed skills to recognize dementia-related behaviours, communicate effectively, and provide calm, compassionate support. This initiative reinforced our commitment to fostering an inclusive and understanding community, ensuring individuals living with dementia feel safe, respected, and supported in their daily interactions.

### Ontario Works & Ontario Disability Support Program Partnership

Launched in 2022, an Ontario Works Outreach Worker has been available every Wednesday at the Central Library to assist residents without requiring an appointment. This Outreach Worker connects residents to a variety of social services, including financial resources, housing, food security, counselling, children's services referrals, and assistance with replacing government-issued ID. The Outreach Worker also liaises with community agencies on behalf of individuals and assists with online government application forms.

Recognizing the growing success of this program and the community’s demand for access to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), the Pickering Library introduced weekly ODSP support in August 2023.

In 2024, an ODSP Caseworker from the Oshawa office was onsite every Friday at the Central Library. No appointment was necessary, and Caseworkers were available to discuss ODSP files and connect residents with additional resources.

## Fire Safety

In 2024, Pickering Fire Services provided various programs, seminars, training, and campaigns to the community.

### Adopt a School

This comprehensive and age-appropriate program for grade one students aligns with the fire safety curriculum.

### Learn Not to Burn

This program for grade three students focuses on fire safety education and provides information about fires in Pickering.

### The Arson Prevention Program for Children

This program is designed for youth and provides strategies to address a child’s fire play or fire setting behaviour. The program aims to reduce these behaviours and keep children and their families safe from fire. The program offers fire safety education, training, and risk assessments from local mental health agencies.

### Older & Wiser

This fire safety program is aimed at older adults. It involves shared learning through Pickering Fire Services with the support of community groups, home support workers, friends, and families of older adults.

### After the Heat

This program was implemented following residential neighbourhood fires. Its objective is to educate residents on fire safety, the likelihood of fire occurrences, and the most common causes of home fires, while also addressing any community questions and concerns.



## FireSafe Pickering

This fire education campaign runs in the spring and fall each year. The goal of the campaign is to educate residents on the probability of fires happening, the most common causes of home fires, and a call to action so residents can protect their family from fire. It is a door-to-door program delivered by firefighters. Pickering Fire Services conducts various campaigns on fire awareness and education, such as FireSafe Pickering, Emergency Preparedness Week, Fire Prevention Week, Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week, and 12 Days of Holiday Safety.

In 2024, Fire Services conducted fire extinguisher training, fire safety in the workplace training, station tours, school fair visits, and fire truck visits in the community. Pickering Fire Services and Ontario Power Generation participated in annual joint training and drills to be prepared for emergencies at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.

In 2024, Pickering Fire Services responded to 5578 calls, a 7.7% increase from 2023 (5180 calls). Below are the incidents by response type:

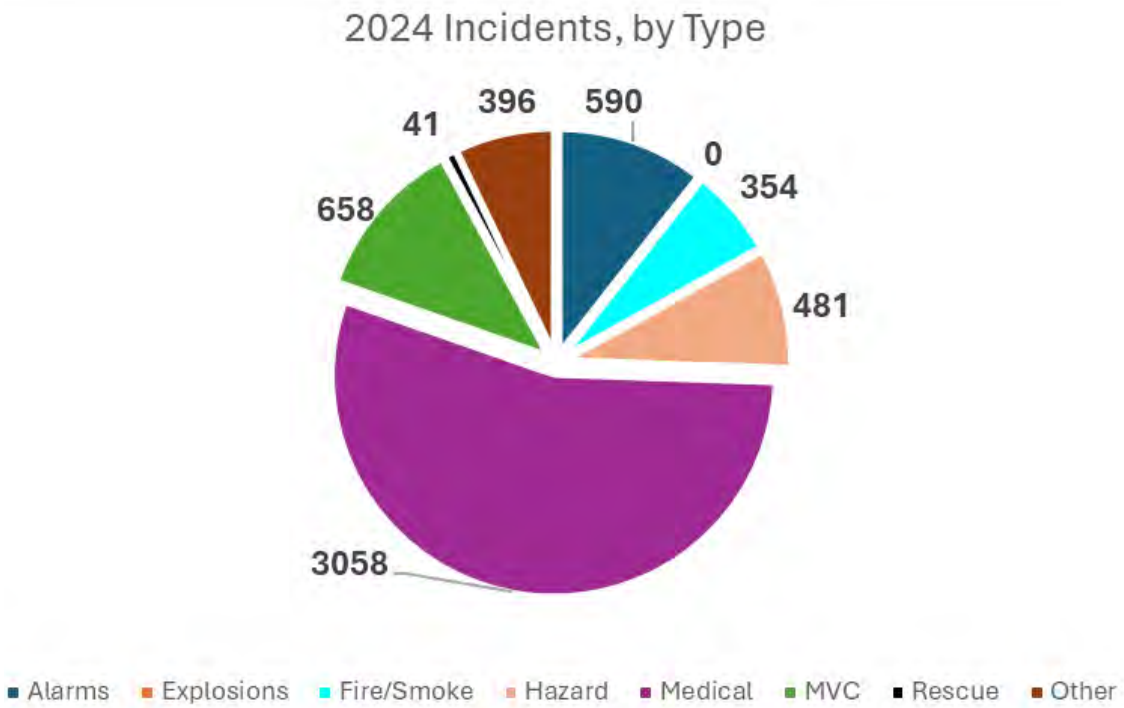


Figure 1.1 Monthly Incident Tracking

MVC – Motor Vehicle Collisions





### 3. Create Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods

**Objective:**  
Create safe, clean, attractive, and welcoming spaces. Some examples include park design, neighbourhood beautification, safe trails that promote healthy living, public art, spaces that promote healthy lifestyles (outdoor gym or hiking trails), lighting and cameras, and enhanced road safety using elements such as streetlighting and cameras.

#### Step Training Inc.

In 2024, the CSWB Advisor coordinated specialized training to strengthen staff capacity in managing high-pressure situations. Step Training Inc. delivered a tailored program for 13 front-facing staff members from the City of Pickering, consisting of two days of Professional De-Escalation training and one day of Mental Health training. The program focused on enhancing emotional regulation, situational awareness, and professionalism, equipping staff with practical strategies to address emotional escalation and engage effectively with distressed individuals. Incorporating scenario-based exercises and a six-month online refresher, the interactive training reinforced key concepts to ensure lasting impact.

### Safety, Self Defence & Walking Home

In response to the strong feedback from our Community Safety survey, which identified a need for strategies to help residents feel safer while walking home, the CSWB Advisor offered a free safety and self-defense workshop this year. Partnering with Villari’s Martial Arts Centre, the workshop saw an impressive turnout of 95 attendees.

Led by Master Joan Richert, a tenth-degree black belt with over 40 years of teaching experience, participants gained valuable skills in personal safety. Master Richert, known for her ability to adapt her classes to empower individuals of all experience levels and physical abilities, provided a comprehensive and accessible learning experience. This initiative underscores our commitment to enhancing community safety and empowering residents to feel confident and secure in their daily lives.



### Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

In 2024, the CSWB Advisor completed Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) training offered by the CPTED Professional Training Centre. This specialized program provided a deeper understanding of how environmental factors can influence safety and security in communities. CPTED focuses on strategies that reduce crime opportunities through thoughtful design and planning, aiming to create safer, more welcoming public spaces. The training equips individuals with the skills to assess and enhance the safety of various environments, empowering individuals to contribute to the development of safer, more resilient communities.



## Naloxone Training

This year, as part of its commitment to improving safety in municipally operated buildings, the CSWB Advisor and Community Services introduced a comprehensive Naloxone training program for First Responders. The program ensures that designated staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to opioid overdoses by administering Naloxone, a life-saving medication. Over the course of the program, 122 staff members were trained by the of 2024.



The training covers recognizing the signs and symptoms of opioid overdoses, proper administration of Naloxone, and the safety protocols involved. Additionally, staff are educated on the associated risks, including the need to perform CPR when necessary and the potential for multiple doses to be required. Naloxone kits are strategically placed near Automated External Defibrillator (AED) stations and maintained by First Responder Coordinators, who ensure that supplies are replenished, and training is kept up to date.

This initiative highlights a proactive approach to safeguarding both employees and the public, ensuring a swift and informed response to opioid-related emergencies in the workplace.

## Road Safety

Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE) technology is identified as an effective means to enforce speed limits and enhance road safety for all road users. In Pickering, there are a total of three ASE systems deployed in designated Community Safety Zones (CSZ) to mitigate risks to pedestrians, particularly near schools. In 2024, the City increased its number of radar speed boards from 10 to 13. One of these is permanently fixed, whereas the other 12 were rotated throughout the community based on speeding trends and community concerns.

In 2024, a fifth temporary rubber speed hump was added to Old Brock Road based on comments and concerns from the community. All five rubber speed humps on Old Brock Road are expected to be made permanent in 2025.

In 2024, the City started painting 'Slow' on select streets that have speeding concerns and started using 'Ped-Zones', which are flexible signs and bollards, that are installed directly in the street. Ped-Zones create pinch points, which help slow traffic. Currently there are three streets that have 'Ped-Zones' spring to fall (signs are removed in winter for snow clearing operations).

## Security Cameras

In 2024, the City had 295 closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras at various municipal facilities and outdoor spaces. New security upgrades and camera installations occurred during the year. To promote community safety and well-being, the City installed and upgraded new CCTV cameras in the



Area	Cameras
Don Beer Arena	12 upgraded
CHDRC	5 added
City Hall	5 added
Operations Centre	5 added
Fire stations 2, 5 and 6	Exterior cameras installed
Pickering Museum Village	10 added
Centennial Park	2 added
Esplanade Park	1 added





## 4. Increase Physical Health and Mental Wellness

**Objective:**  
Create support for physical health and mental wellness through community spaces like community centres, community gardens, libraries, and programs that support physical and mental health.

### Lakeridge Health COPD Program

Brought forward by the CSWB Advisor, the City partnered with Lakeridge Health to launch the COPD Community Exercise Clinic, aimed at improving health outcomes for residents living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). Since November 1, 2024, the clinic has provided structured exercise, education, and self-management strategies, offering a comprehensive approach to COPD

care. This program has successfully helped reduce hospital readmissions, enhance quality of life, and promote healthier lifestyles for those affected by COPD, particularly in vulnerable communities. By offering an accessible space for exercise and education, this initiative has bridged healthcare gaps and supported long-term patient wellness, aligning with the CSWB plan's focus on community health and resilience.

### Family Physician Recruitment Program

As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance community well-being and access to essential services, the City joined the Durham Family Physician Recruitment Program. This initiative aligns with the CSWB plan by addressing the healthcare needs of residents, particularly considering the physician shortage in the region.

By supporting the recruitment and retention of family physicians, this program will help ensure that the community has the necessary healthcare resources to thrive, contributing to the overall health and safety of Durham residents.

### Mental Wellness Committee

In 2024, the Mental Wellness Committee launched a range of initiatives to support workplace mental health. Highlights included Mental Health First Aid training for 50 staff, interactive workshops on mindfulness and healthy eating, and therapeutic sessions like Facial and Fascia Stretch Therapy.

To foster connection and physical well-being, the Committee organized volleyball and pickleball tournaments, a Learn to Skate workshop, Improv in the Park, and employee participation in the Terry Fox Run. Therapeutic Paws of Canada also visited City facilities, offering moments of comfort.

Ongoing awareness efforts included sharing mental health resources, key observance dates, and a flag-raising event to reinforce the City's commitment to mental health advocacy.

### Financial Assistance

#### Recreation Card Program

In partnership with the Region of Durham, the City of Pickering covered 50% of the cost of the Recreation Card Program, with the Region funding the remaining 50%. This program allowed families to register for one activity per season and choose between either a Winter Break Camp or March Break Camp. During the summer, families could enroll in two summer camps. In 2024, 315 families participated, a 45.2% increase from 2023.

#### Low-Income Scholarship (Pickering residents only)

This scholarship provided a 50% reduction fee for either a registered activity or a membership to the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex (CHDRC). Eligibility for those receiving Ontario Works was based on the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO). In 2024, 81 individuals used this scholarship for recreation programs and 89 individuals used it for memberships.



## Disability Scholarship (Pickering residents only)

This scholarship offered a 50% fee reduction for a registered activity or membership at the CHDRC. Eligibility was automatic for individuals receiving the Disability Tax Credit or ODSP. In 2024, 59 individuals used this scholarship for recreation programs and 6 individuals used it for memberships.

## Canadian Tire Jumpstart Foundation

This program provided financial support to families, enabling children to participate in City-run recreation programs. In 2024, 16 families benefited from this funding.

## Durham Region Daycare Fee Subsidy

This subsidy helped families with childcare costs based on their annual income. It was available for City of Pickering summer camps and March Break programs. In 2024, 428 families accessed this subsidy—an increase of over 400% from 2023.

These assistance programs help ensure that financial barriers do not prevent residents from engaging in recreation and wellness activities.

## Increase in High-Demand Programs

In 2024, the City enhanced access

to high-demand programs and community initiatives, providing residents of all ages with greater opportunities for recreation, education, and safety.

## Family Day & Community Events

Free drop-in programs saw strong participation, with 250 attendees enjoying arts and crafts at the Creative Centre and 200 participants exploring acrylic painting at the Art Studio.

The Aging Well Together Information & Active Living Fair attracted over 950 participants, offering resources on health, aging in place, fraud prevention, cooking safety, and fire prevention. The events also featured art and fitness demonstrations and interactive pickleball coaching.

## Summer Camp Expansion

To meet growing demand, the City expanded summer camp locations to Rosebank and Major Oaks neighbourhoods, providing more convenient options for families. As a result, registration increased by 21.7% from 2023, sitting at 2,800 registrants in 2024, giving more children the chance to participate in fun and enriching experiences.

## Teen Engagement

The PAC4Teens program, in partnership with the City, collected

662 lbs. of non-perishable food for St. Paul's on the Hill Community Food Bank as part of a regional Hunger Action Month initiative. Across the Durham Region, this effort contributed to a total donation of 4,239 lbs. of food.

## Wellness Support

The Exercise for Healthy Joints program provided wellness support for 20 participants. Fire safety initiatives, including Holiday Safety and Cooking Safety workshops, engaged 8 and 10 attendees, respectively.

These initiatives reflect the City's dedication to fostering a vibrant, informed, and connected community, ensuring residents have access to valuable programs that enhance their safety and well-being.

## Earth Month

To celebrate Earth Month, the City hosted a series of free educational workshops featuring expert guest speakers. Over 275 participants attended sessions covering topics such as rain gardens, seed saving, container vegetable gardening, and local bird species.

Beyond these workshops, more than 1,250 residents of all ages engaged in interactive programs that explored:

- Winter bird count
- Everything Maple Syrup
- Compost giveaway & waste management

- Local bird species and habitats
- Salmon hatchery setup and fry release
- Winter wonders and seasonal nature activities
- Heat pumps and home energy efficiency incentives

These events provided residents with firsthand learning experiences, fostering a deeper appreciation for the environment and sustainable practices in the community.

## Seed Library Project

The City of Pickering's gardening initiative continues to grow, fostering community engagement and sustainability. Through the Seed Library Project with Pickering Library, and 19 gardening and sustainability programs, residents have gained firsthand experience in urban agriculture and environmental stewardship. These initiatives saw an impressive 585 participants, with over 5,000 seed packs distributed, empowering community members to cultivate their own gardens and promote local biodiversity.







## 5. Improve Living Standards

**Objective:**

Create programs and services accessible to all residents regardless of income through low cost, subsidized or free programs, supporting food security and accessibility. Attracting businesses to bring new jobs to Pickering.

### Cooking Up Futures

Initiated by the CSWB Advisor in partnership with Durham Community Health Centre (DCHC), the City launched a youth-focused food security program in 2024 at the Pickering DCHC. This initiative provided 12 local youth aged 16 to 21 with an opportunity to develop essential life skills. Going beyond traditional cooking classes, the program taught participants how to prepare simple, affordable meals using pantry staples. In addition to hands-on cooking experience, participants received take-home supplies such as oven mitts, can openers, and cutting boards. This initiative aligns with ongoing efforts to foster life skills and promote well-being among youth, particularly those in poverty-affected neighbourhoods.

### Support Community Efforts Through Grant Programs

The Pickering Community Grant initiative plays a key role in supporting and enhancing community well-being in the city. In 2024, ‘We Grow Food’ was awarded funds to expand urban gardens and offer educational workshops.

The City's Environmental Schools Grant Program provides Pickering students with the opportunity to implement activities that contribute to a healthy environment. In 2024, local schools used grant funds to create butterfly gardens, install community vegetable garden beds, purchase trees, and build outdoor learning spaces. Students also participated in workshops on seed growing, climate change, and outdoor learning, while enhancing their gardens with native, pollinator-friendly materials and bird feeders to support pollinators.

### Ovee Outreach Vehicle – Expanding Library Access

From October to December 2024, PPL’s Ovee (Outreach Vehicle) welcomed 1,539 visitors, bringing library services directly to neighbourhoods farther from existing branches. Community members had the opportunity to browse collections, participate in scheduled events, sign up for library cards, pick up holds, and check out materials—all from the convenience of the mobile unit. Ovee continues to enhance accessibility and engagement, ensuring more residents can connect with library resources right where they are.





# Snow Clearing

The City offers senior citizens and people with permanent physical or cognitive disabilities a snow clearing service to assist them with their sidewalk snow clearing responsibilities, and access to their home.

To qualify, you must meet the following criteria:

- You are over the age of 65, or if under 65 years, have proof of permanent physical or cognitive disability.
- You live within the urban area of Pickering (south of Taunton Road), or within the hamlets of Brougham, Claremont, Greenwood & Whitevale.
- There is no one under the age of 65 residing in your home (except for a person with a permanent physical or cognitive disability).

In 2024, Snow Clearing services were distributed to 390 households.

- 42.6% qualified as people with a disability
- 57.4% qualified as seniors

Additionally:

- 29.5% qualified under GAINS (Guaranteed Annual Income Systems) or GIS (Guaranteed Income Supplement)
- 48.7% qualified with income less than \$86,912
- 18.5% qualified with annual income between \$86,913-\$142,609
- 3.3% qualified with annual income between \$142,610 – \$199,900

Snow Clearing



Snow Clearing, by Income



# Employment & Skill-Building Workshops

In 2024, the City and PPL provided 35 employment and skill-building programs, helping residents develop career skills and financial literacy. Of these, 18 workshops focused on effective job searching, offering practical guidance and resources.

Key highlights included:

- 5-Minute Film Festival (5MFF) Career Path Series
- Entrepreneurship programs
- Cover letter & resume-building workshops
- Interview preparation sessions
- Job fairs
- Pathway to Newcomers sessions

These initiatives aimed to empower participants with the tools and knowledge needed to advance their careers and achieve financial stability.

# Supported Self-Filing Tax Workshops

PPL introduced Supported Self-Filing Tax Workshops to equip residents with the skills and confidence to file their own income taxes using Wealthsimple. These interactive sessions promote financial literacy and empower participants to manage future tax filings independently. Through six workshops, 27 clients successfully completed their returns, collectively receiving \$16,381.63 in tax refunds—offering financial relief and fostering long-term financial stability.





## 6. Support Basic Needs

**Objective:**

Create improved access to nutritious food, shelter and personal care/hygiene products and services through programs and services.

### Homelessness Subcommittee Initiatives

This year, the City established the Homelessness Subcommittee (HS) to strengthen its coordinated response to housing insecurity. The subcommittee’s mandate is to identify key priorities, support stakeholders and community engagement, conduct research, and provide input on homelessness and basic needs. This includes developing policies, advocating necessary resources, and advising the CSWBAC on strategic actions. Working in collaboration with Durham Region, other levels of government, and community organizations, the subcommittee explores solutions addressing mental health, substance use, wrap-around supports, and transitional and supportive housing in Pickering. While the subcommittee is comprised of non-voting members, all action items need to be presented and voted on by the CSWBAC.

As part of its work, the subcommittee helped lead two key initiatives this year:

#### World Homeless Day

World Homeless Day (October 10) was a collaborative event hosted by Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS) in partnership with the City, the Community Development Council Durham (CDCD), the GAP Committee, and the Region of Durham. With over 200 attendees, the event focused on raising awareness and connecting individuals to critical resources. Attendees had access to shelter supports, mental health services, harm reduction resources, basic needs supplies, and on-site service navigation. This event reinforced our commitment to addressing homelessness through coordinated, community-driven solutions.

#### Whiskers & Wellness

City staff also launched Whiskers and Wellness, Pickering’s first-ever free pet wellness clinic for individuals experiencing homelessness. This initiative, a partnership between Animal Services, CSWB Advisor, and multiple social service organizations, embraced a one-health model, ensuring both people and pets receive care. With four local veterinarians generously donating their time, the initiative supported 14 pet owners and a total of 21 animals by providing vaccinations, wellness checks, and essential pet supplies. The positive response highlighted the deep bond between vulnerable individuals and their pets, reinforcing the need for holistic, compassionate community support.

### Overnight Warming Centre

The Overnight Emergency Warming Centre, funded by Durham Region, was facilitated at Peace Lutheran Church by Dedicated Advocacy Resource Support (DARS). Operating annually from December 1 through March 31, the centre was triggered when temperatures reached -8 degrees Celsius or colder, or a wind chill of -15 degrees Celsius or colder. This new threshold allowed the centre to remain open more nights than centres triggered by the typical

regional cold alerts. The centre also opened in response to other adverse weather conditions, such as freezing rain, high winds, and snowstorms. When cold weather conditions were present, the centre operated from 8:00 pm to 8:00 am, seven days a week. A blue flag flying at half-mast indicated that it was too cold or wet to be outside at night, signaling that the warming centre would open at 8:00 pm, while a full-mast flag meant the centre was already open.





This accessible, low-barrier centre welcomed animals and provided meals, snacks, clothing, and take-home non-perishable items. Hosting the service off-site and partnering with an actively engaged community organization, effectively connected housing-insecure individuals with essential resources. In December 2024, DARS provided safe overnight refuge on 11 nights, reaching full capacity with up to 30 individuals each night. In January, the centre operated for 29 nights, offering 870 centre spaces.

## Extreme Heat

The City provided designated public facilities when an extreme heat warning was issued. During the operating hours of the facilities, residents were able to seek shelter to ensure public safety and wellbeing. Facilities have included the Central Library, CHDRC, and East Shore Community Centre.

## Shower Access

In 2024, supported by the CSWB Advisor, the City, in partnership with DARS, continued to provide essential shower facilities for individuals experiencing homelessness. These facilities were in the arena dressing rooms of the O'Brien Rink at the CHDRC. DARS staff supported patrons by offering

towels, hygiene packages, and assistance with additional services and resources available in the community.

In 2023, DARS initially supported 75 individuals with access to shower facilities. However, by 2024, the initiative saw a significant increase, providing showers to 106 individuals throughout the year. Monthly usage peaked in October (14), November (16), and December (12), highlighting the growing demand and expanded access to this vital service. This growth underscores the continued success of the partnership in addressing the needs of housing-insecure residents.

## Partnerships

DARS is a community outreach organization that supports housing-insecure residents by providing meals, clothing, and non-perishable food while collaborating with local organizations to improve service accessibility. In 2024, DARS served over 172 meals to vulnerable residents in Pickering.

## Introduction to Gardening

In the summer, DARS partnered with CSWB Advisor and Community Services to host a gardening workshop tailored for housing-insecure individuals. The workshop covered the basics of growing vegetables, fruits, potted plants, and herbs, as well as cooking fresh produce from plant to table. Participants received free transportation to and from the event, seeds, pots, and essential cooking supplies. A total of 12 individuals took part in this initiative, fostering food security and self-sufficiency.

## Wellness Checks

In 2024, the City of Pickering, supported by the CSWB Advisor, collaborated with local organizations and City departments to respond to the rising challenge of housing insecurity. Wellness checks were led by the CSWB Advisor with support from Customer Care, Operations, Bylaw, Community Services, and the Office of the CAO. These checks were conducted in partnership with several external organizations and outreach teams, including DARS, Durham Region's 24-hour Street Outreach Team, the Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP), the Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP), the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), and the John Howard Society of Durham Region. Together, these efforts contributed to both wellness checks and the development of municipal encampment strategies.

By the end of the year, approximately 26 individuals were identified as experiencing housing insecurity. However, this figure does not fully reflect those who opted not to be included on the Regional By-Name List (BNL). The BNL, maintained by Durham Region, is a continuously updated, real-time registry of individuals experiencing homelessness. It helps service providers track those in need, coordinate support, and prioritize access to housing and essential services based on individual circumstances. While the BNL remains a critical tool in addressing homelessness, participation is voluntary, meaning the true number of housing-insecure individuals may be higher than reported.



# Access to Wi-Fi

PPL has free Wi-Fi Hotspots available to borrow for Pickering residents, ensuring low-barrier internet access. This service enabled residents to connect to essential resources related to education, healthcare, food, housing, and income. In 2024, the hotspots were circulated 98 times, while the internet kits were borrowed 18 times.

# Community Climate Adaptation Plan

The City developed its first Community Climate Adaptation Plan (CCAP) in collaboration with the community and key stakeholders. The plan identifies climate risks from extreme weather events like severe storms, high heat days, and increased frequency and intensity of precipitation, and lays out an action plan aimed at helping to protect the city, its infrastructure, and its residents. Recognizing that climate impacts are not felt equally across all residents, the CCAP integrates equity lens considerations to help ensure that vulnerable populations, including for example, low-income households, seniors, and marginalized groups, receive the support and resources needed



to build resilience. By enhancing preparedness and resiliency, the CCAP will help the community effectively prepare for, and adapt to extreme weather events. The plan was finalized and endorsed by Council in spring 2025.

# Urban Agriculture Initiatives

The City advanced its Urban Agriculture Short-Term Action Plan to promote local food production, strengthen community connections, and support environmental sustainability. A few 2024 achievements include:

- > Launched an Urban Agriculture Webpage as a resource hub, offering information on urban agriculture practices, community garden policies, and FAQs about backyard hens and beekeeping.
- > Implemented a Seed Library at George Ashe Community Centre. Through this program, the Library offers free workshops on food literacy and gardening, along with seed donations and exchanges.
- > Developed a Gather & Grow Exhibit which has been featured at the Pickering Museum Village and other City facilities, promoting urban agriculture events and programs throughout the year.
- > Valley Plentiful Community Garden (VPCG) at Diana, Princess of Wales Park underwent significant enhancements, including a 13-car asphalt parking lot with accessible spaces, three large raised accessible garden beds, bicycle racks, and landscaping. These improvements boost safety and accessibility for participants. VPCG continues to be a vital hub for urban agriculture, allowing members to grow their own produce, support food security, and stay active. Volunteers also maintain select beds to provide fresh food twice weekly to St. Paul's on-the-Hill Food Bank — a valued contribution to the community.
- > Municipal planning and zoning provisions were updated to support urban agriculture by clarifying that growing can take place anywhere on private property, allowing vertical farming in employment areas, and permitting plant-based manufacturing in industrial zones. These changes promote sustainability, local food production, and economic growth within the community.





- > Collaborating with land developers and builders to incorporate community and vegetative roof gardens into new developments, with more site and landscape plans featuring elements such as raised garden beds, community gardens, and tall building podiums.

These efforts support objectives to raise awareness, improve food security, and encourage “grow-your-own-food” practices. This aligns with the CSWB Plan’s on creating safe neighbourhoods, improving living standards and supporting basic needs through increased access to locally grown food.

## Pickering Prom Boutique

To support high school students with formal clothing for their prom and graduation, PPL hosted its second Prom Boutique. The event encouraged residents to donate their gently used dresses, suits, and formal wear at the Central Library, so that students could shop for free. Thanks to the community’s generosity, the two-day event supported 103 students to dress for their upcoming special events.

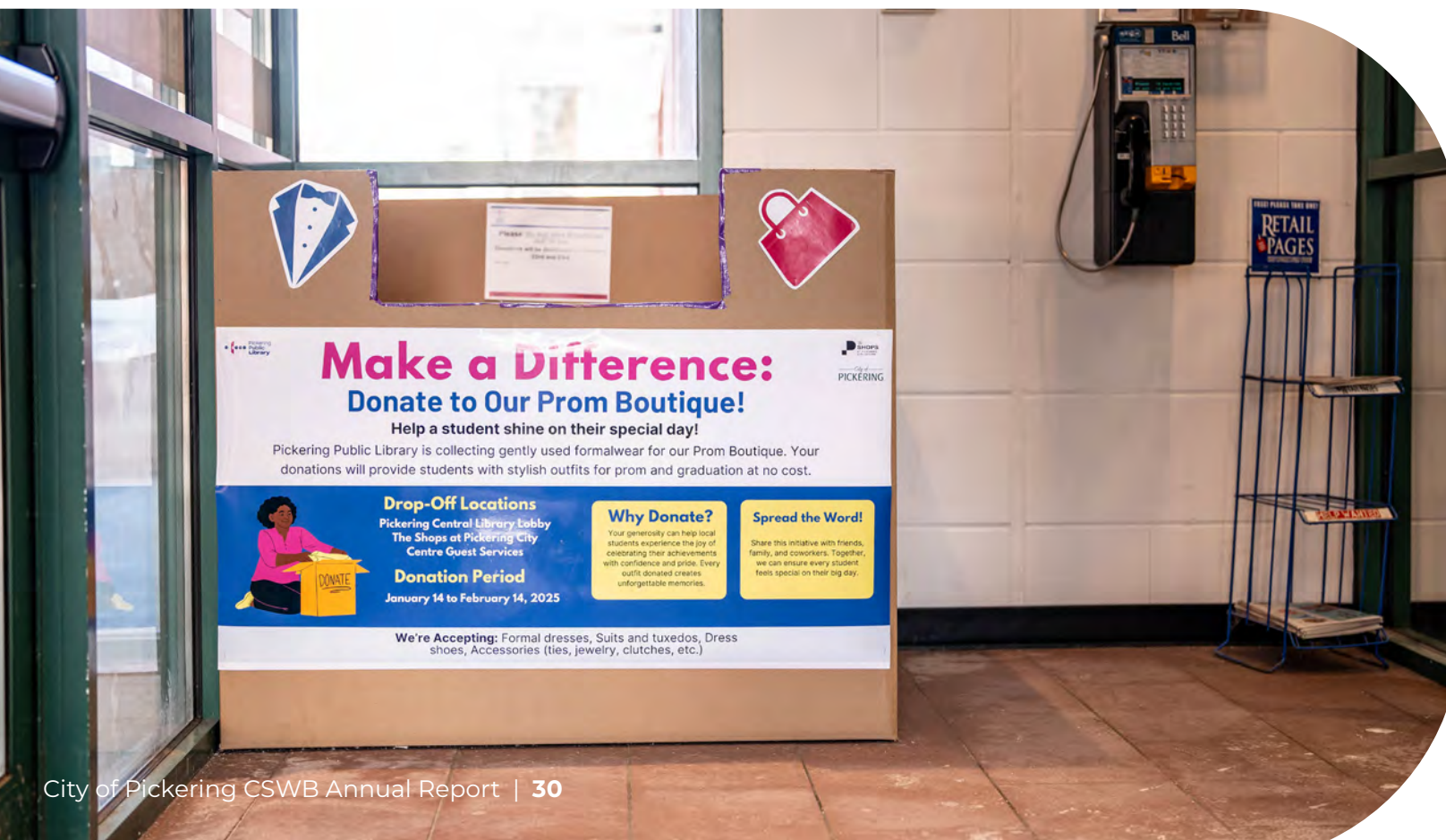
## 7. Promote EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), Accessibility & Reconciliation

### Objective:

Create opportunities for engagement and relationship building through safer community spaces, programs, events, and community expression. This priority spans across each priority area and is a non-exhaustive list that will reflect current context.

## Durham Regional Police Children’s Games

Pickering supported the 40th Annual Durham Regional Police Children’s Games for approximately 80 youth with diverse abilities aged 5 to 18 on November 10, 2024, at Durham College. Pickering has partnered annually with DRPS, Grandview Children’s Centre, and other community organizations since 1985 on this event.





## Supporting Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

In 2024, the City approved its first Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, a multi-year plan with five priority areas:

- > Education and Awareness
- > Structure and Resources
- > Community Consultation and Engagement
- > Policies, Programs, and Practices
- > Measurement and Accountability

In developing the EDI Strategy, City staff hired Goss Gilroy Inc. to engage in community consultation to gather valuable insights and recommendations. This process included the formation of a Community Working Group (CWG), which played a crucial role in ensuring diverse perspectives were included in the strategy's development. The CWG, made up of 15 Pickering residents representing a broad spectrum of communities, interests, and needs, provided critical feedback through information sessions and workshops, which helped shape the EDI Strategy.

As part of this initiative, the City integrated its Accessibility and Community Safety & Well-Being plans into the EDI portfolio, expanding the team and strengthening a coordinated approach to inclusion, accessibility, and safety.

## Key 2024 EDI Achievements



### Together We Rise Durham: Black History, Intersectionality, and Joy

Hosted at the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, this regional Black History Month event featured music, dance, and a panel discussion with Debbie Miles-Senior, Dr. Andrew Bernard Thomas, Liza Arnason, and Shellene Drakes-Tull.



### Truth and Reconciliation Community Gathering

Durham Region's largest National Truth and Reconciliation gathering, with over 800 attendees at Esplanade Park, featuring Indigenous teachings, reflections, and traditions.



### Black Joy Holiday Market

A three-day event in partnership with the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce and Durham Family & Cultural Centre, featuring 90+ Black-owned businesses and attracting over 3,000 attendees. Proceeds supported Afro-Caribbean food baskets for families in need across Durham Region.



# EDI Staff Training

In 2024, the City of Pickering launched a comprehensive staff training initiative as part of its EDI efforts. This included a series of workshops such as the Red Dress Indigenous Beading Workshop, Pride and Gender Diversity in the Workplace, Black Canadian History and Contemporary Activism, Learning American Sign Language and Providing Accessibility, and a Sharing Circle on Residential Schools. Additionally, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training was provided for Council and Senior Leadership, ensuring a broad and inclusive approach to education and awareness.



# Conclusion

The progress outlined in this report reflects our collective commitment to fostering a safer, healthier, and more inclusive community. Through strategic partnerships, innovative programming, and a focus on collaboration, we have taken meaningful steps to address the priorities set out in the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to building on these successes—listening to the voices of our community, strengthening local partnerships, and adapting our initiatives to meet evolving needs. True community safety and well-being are achieved not through isolated efforts, but through sustained collaboration, compassion, and action.

Together, we will continue working toward a future where every resident feels safe, supported, and empowered.





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